

ATENAS TODAY



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ATENAS TODAY is a free English language newsletter for the residents and potential residents of Atenas, Costa Rica. It contains informative articles and creative compositions submitted by our readers, and is distributed via email approximately once a month to over 350 email addresses. To get on the distribution list or to submit material, please send an email to Fred Macdonald at fredmac222@yahoo.com.

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My Morning of Pampering at:

CLINICA DENTAL O.C.I.
SPA & MEDICINA ESTETICA
Northeast Corner of the Park of Atenas

by *Alicia Jackson*

I arrived promptly at 9:15A.M. There was no wait; I was led directly into the massage area. Upon entering, my sense of vision and smell was immediately drawn to the aromatic candles burning throughout the room. It was a very nice touch, as well as the lovely artistic bamboo lamp. I was then asked to strip down to my panties, and put on a soft, white, terry cloth robe. I thought to myself, "Self, we are not at #60 Vista Atenas any longer". A young woman entered the room. Once again I had a conversation with myself, "OK self, this can't be the massage gal because she is half my size". As usual, I was wrong. Speaking fluent English, Wendy introduced herself to me, as well as provided me with her qualifications as a masseuse. Wendy is a Physiotherapist, with six years of education, at the University of Costa Rica.

Now it was time to begin the massage. Wendy asked me to lay face down on the sparkling clean new massage table. Then she placed a towel over my buttocks, removed my robe, turned on some gentle Celtic music, and with that the next heavenly hour began.

Wendy's capable hands worked muscle and tissue from my toes, on up to the top of my head. During the massage, special attention was given to the tight and knotted areas around my shoulders and neck. The massage was unlike the deep tissue massages I have received in the past. It was like poetry in motion. I felt like a blob of Jell-O. I was ready to give her my first born (even though he is now 45 years old, married, and father of two).

Next it was on to experience the facial.....

As to this part, of my morning, I will admit that it was only the second facial I have received. Wendy also preformed the facial. It was wonderful to have someone apply the cleansing lotions, soothing crèmes and rejuvenating serums to my parched, dry skin. It made me feel like I was floating on the proverbial *cloud nine*. When finished, my face felt like it was as smooth as the soft skin of a Georgia peach. I have always been a fan of good ole Avon products. Now I am a firm believer in Germaine de Capuccini.

My husband asked how I felt...and I told him, "I wanted to put on my laciest under garments, a lovely silk dress, and go out to a wonderful candle light dinner." You that know my husband, will know what came next.....

Soon I will have another half day of pampering.. That day I will have an appointment with Dr. Comba to discuss my middle age health, as well as weight issues.

Talk to you again soon

Zoning Plan

by Marietta Arce

Greetings to all of you!

Before composing what will be a lengthy summary of the current status of the Zoning Plan, I have reflected and sought inspiration and clarity. I endeavor to present an unbiased and non-judgmental document. I beg your indulgence and hope that you will accept my efforts generously and that you will share them with any and all you think might be interested in what is going on in our town. It has been a long process and it is far from concluded. We need citizen participation so that we have a real 'development' plan not just a 'building code'.

I will begin by briefly reviewing the entire process. Around the year 2000, due to alarming, rapid and uncontrolled urban growth in our country and the problems stemming from this, the government of CR issued a decree aimed at guiding the institutions responsible for formulating a National Development Plan for the country and more urgently for the Greater Metropolitan Area (GMA) comprised of 31 cantones. Five districts of Atenas (Atenas Center, Escobal, Concepcion, Mercedes and Jesus) are included in the GMA.

Between 2000-2003, the existing 1982 zoning plan was reviewed, and it was deemed necessary for it to be revised. In 2001 the National Counsel for Urban Planning (CNPU) was created. Its members are planning ministers, MOPT, MINAE, INVU, IFAM & CNFL, institutions in which we have put our trust over many decades and on which we rely to uncover and resolve our various problems (water shortages, energy crisis, infrastructure, etc.). During this time, Phases 0-2 of the National Development Plan 2002-2012 (NDP) was also taking place with the participation of officials at the National Level.

By mid-2003, Phase 3 of the NDP is being entered into and that is the first time that we are introduced to PRU-GAM (Rural/Urban Planning for the Greater Metropolitan Area) and told that its permanent members are the Mayors of San Jose & Vasquez de Coronado, representing the GMA of San Jose Province; the mayor of Alajuela, representing the GMA of Alajuela Province (the districts of Atenas included here); the mayor of Heredia, representing the GMA of Heredia Province, and the mayor of Oreamuno, representing the GMA of Cartago Province. These are the representatives of the 31 cantones mentioned previously.

The budget for Phase 3 is a total of 18.5 Million Euros, 11 from the EU and the other 7.5 from Costa Rica. The work that concerned us (Atenas) began in 2004. Because CATUCA has a 'quality of life' heading as part of its mission statement, we felt the onus was on us to be proactive in the process from the very beginning. From 2004-2006 PRU-GAM was busy at the regional level and we attended several workshops for about 15

months. We requested some changes (more lead time, better ‘marketing’, clear materials, etc.) but never felt really taken seriously. We demanded a more transparent, coherent process but met subtle rejection to our suggestions. In spite of all this, we were firm in insisting that we had a right and a duty to be included in the process for the sake of our members and the citizens at large. After the 15 month process, we were reminded that we had been participating in a **regional** effort and that the **local** effort would begin in the early months of 2007! We persevered.

The first workshop for the **local** portion of the zoning plan began with a poorly-announced and poorly attended workshop on June 2, 2007 at the Parish Hall. We were introduced to IDOM, the Spanish company hired by PRU-GAM to conduct the local level workshops for the 31 cantones. IDOM’s ‘team’ for us consisted of a geographer, two sociologists and an architect who would be with us for the next 15 months or so to help us plan our ‘vision’ for Atenas. This first workshop was dismal and we hoped for a better outcome at the next one which was scheduled tentatively for some time in September 2007.

The date for the second workshop changed several times but it eventually took place on December 5, 2007 at the Lion’s Club. This second workshop had attendance of about 40 people and very valuable input was received from those participating. We were told at the conclusion of the evening that the changes we requested had been noted and would be reflected in the materials handed out at the third and final workshop before end February 2008.

By March 2008, nothing had happened and CATUCA repeatedly phoned, wrote, etc. with no positive results. We finally requested and received an audience at the Municipality and were told that the workshop would be held on April 29 at the Municipality. On April 29th, the workshop began and it was noticed that **none** of the changes previously requested had been incorporated and the participants and presenters engaged in heated verbal exchanges that preempted any attempt at civilized discussion. The meeting was adjourned and rescheduled for May 10th. That date was later cancelled and rescheduled for June 14th.

On June 14th, about 50 people from Atenas attended the third and final workshop, the last opportunity they had to participate in this process. Most of those present have followed the long road that got us here and were discouraged to see that not all the changes were incorporated as hoped; that the printed materials were of poor quality and that the cartographer hired by IDOM to update a map, complete with a legend has not finished this vital part of the project. The ‘team’ was unable to show us exactly where things were and what things meant and we were not given the opportunity to discuss things until we felt clear about them or to request additional workshops in the future.

IDOM now goes back to their offices, makes the appropriate changes, and submits the revised work with their recommendations to the Municipality. Once in the Municipality, the materials can be freely accessed by all with a simple request to the

people in charge at the Municipality who are obligated by law to distribute the material. The problem is knowing when it is available, but we will follow-up.

This 'tentative' local zoning plan becomes enforceable after the town of **24,000** inhabitants is called on to participate in a 'referendum' to vote for or against a proposal that **50** or so participants in workshops have suggested they need or want!

So, we can see that it will be some time before our 'issues' are really addressed. And what are **some** of those issues?

Our infrastructure is collapsing.

Our 'protected' zones are being violated on a daily basis.

Our citizens are suffering involuntary water rationing.

Crime and domestic violence are on the rise.

Our youth (the largest group of citizens) are deprived of activities and places to satisfy their needs for community participation and self-expression.

Our schools are in disrepair.

We have no proper recycling program.

We are courting a kind of 'tourism' previously unknown in our canton.

We have no proper waste management program.

Drug use is alarmingly high.

....these are just a few, I am sure you can think of your own.

I am an optimist by nature. But I am also a realist. I have lived long enough to know that non-participation is still participation. I still believe in people and I hope that more of you will begin to take the first steps toward becoming more proactive in this process. We need more voices of reason; we need for the process to become democratic and transparent. Do not make the mistake of believing that your one vote or suggestion doesn't count.

Please join us in creating a reality of the Atenas we envision so that in a decade we can look back at all we have done and not look forward to the 44th workshop with IDOM....

Thank you.

Marietta Arce Valverde
8395-3923//2446-8950
marietta_arce@yahoo.com

NOTE: If anyone needs or wants exact dates, websites, etc. please contact me and I will be happy to provide you with more information. I welcome any and all feedback.

Atenas Foundation for Helping Abandoned Animals

by Lorna Smith

I have written a number of columns for Atenas Today, but this might be the hardest one that I have written. The story isn't pretty; but I must tell it. I hope that many of you who have compassionate hearts continue to read on. I challenge those of you who do care, to spend a day as I did with Dora, the Association's President, visiting and photographing some of the animals in the gravest need. For all of you who have helped the Foundation to date, a huge thank you from us and from the animals. For those of you who want to help, please consider making a donation or better yet volunteering your time to help take care of the many, many dogs and cats who are suffering and in need here in our own picturesque town of Atenas!

The first stop we made today was to a family in Barrio Jesus. Here we encountered a woman, her small son, and husband living in a very small house, not much more than a shack. Outside, we found five adorable puppies, one female and four males, suffering from severe malnutrition. The mother claims that they "gave away" the mother dog, but we had to suspect that something much worse had happened to her. The puppies are mostly skin and bones and extended tummies that we expect are full of parasites. And yet, they still were lively and adorable, begging for attention and love. These puppies are in desperate need of homes, or foster homes. Once these puppies are in a better environment with food, water, treatment for the parasites and love, we are sure they will thrive. Without this care, the outlook is very bleak. Look at these beseeching faces and let us know if you can give at least one of them a temporary home where they can receive nourishment and love.

The next stop we made was to visit a sweet dog, part Rottweiler, living in a cage not much bigger than the dog herself. Her "owner" (read that abuser) says that he keeps the dog in the cage to discourage thieves because he can't afford a gate! And this is all the life that she has. We are fervently hoping that we can get permission from the authorities to remove this poor dog from this horrific situation. We will need an immediate home or foster care for her. Take a close look at you will see that she barely has room to stand. The cage has no floor, just the bars.

And if these two cases were not enough to cause us enormous distress, the third home we visited was even worse. There, we found an emaciated-beyond-belief beautiful Golden Retriever. At one time, I am sure he had an impeccable pedigree and perhaps a loving home. Did he get lost and end up in these intolerable conditions? Was he stolen? We may never know. We made two visits to the house where he “lives” today. The first was to find him with no food or water and no sign that he had been fed in the recent past. No one was home, and it appeared they had not been home in some while. The dog was locked in a carport. We forced our way in to give him water immediately, and to check out his condition. He was so skinny he had become weak and also had the worst flea infestation that Dora had ever seen. So, we made an emergency visit to town for food and flea treatment. Still no sign of the owner upon our return. It broke both our hearts to leave him, but at least for tonight, we knew he had food and water. We vowed to return the following day to “liberate him” with the force of the authorities behind us and find him an immediate foster home,.

When returned to health, this dog will be a gorgeous fellow. Please consider helping him out right away. He is so sweet, and will be eternally grateful.

I know that these photos may be hard to see. But please think of the difference you can make in the life of a dog, (or cat)! By taking in one of the animals who so desperately need a home. Or volunteer your time or make a donation. A little goes a long way to help give hope to an desperate dog.

Visit the website below for more information on how you can become involved. Or call Lorna at 2446-8452 or Sylvia at 8868-1386

<http://www.costa-rica-live.com/AnimalesAtenas>